

African traditional system of government and its efficacy in governance: A comparative analysis of Idomaland Ojira and Igboland Aladinma/Oha

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Abstract: Emerging trends in governance particularly in post-Colonial Africa have continued to show a display of a high level of inefficiency in the adopted and practiced Western system of government. While much has been suggested as lead factors for these inefficiencies, little or nothing has been done concerning the strangeness of these adopted European systems of Government in Africa. This paper examines the two traditional systems of governance: Ojira and Aladinma/Oha to explore their differences, practices, and efficiency in the administration of pre-colonial Idomaland/Igboland of present-day Nigeria. Adopting the use of historical qualitative methodology, this paper holds that: although these pre-colonial African systems of governance had their challenges, their efficacy in administering the populace before European incursion cannot be overemphasized. To this end, the paper suggests that rather than continue in these European-styled systems of governance that have led Africans nowhere, attempts should be made to incorporate the indigenous African system of governance into modern government to increase and accelerate good governance and development.

Keywords: African, Aladinma/Oha, Governance, Ojira, System, Traditional

1. Introduction

Away from moderately late Semitic stimulus ... the refinement of Africa are the efforts of the Hamates... who are Caucasians, for instance, belong to the same exceptional subdivision of mankind as virtually all Europeans (Walk, 1978: 16).

The above statement depicts the Eurocentric view of the Africans and Pre-Colonial African societies before colonial encroachment in the early 19th Century. In the bid to abrogate every form of Civilization found in the African continent to European influence, early European explorers traced such civilizations to the influence of the Hamatic race which according to them, were "countrified 'European' who migrated in sequence into Africa with better comprehension and understanding, added to a more improved technology base than the black unindustrialized Africans". Although this assertion has been debunked long ago by African scholars, reference is made to it here to show the perspective to which Europeans see the Africans that influenced the relationship and impacts during the Colonial era. To the Europeans, Africans lack what it takes to live a completely civilized human life hence they see their colonization move as a rescue mission to Africa. To fully achieve this mission, the Africans have to be taught how to eat, dress and speak and how to govern in the European ways. Hence, by the end of colonization in the late 19th Century, the entire African continent was a-washed with European-styled civilization including the European style of governance.

Although there are meek progresses in some countries, the post-colonial State has been unable to launch rights-based political and economic systems of governance that would expedite unification of state-building and stimulate economic development. To a large extent, this has been due to its detachment from the established and cultural principles of its constituency. The prevailing state of poverty on the continent, the persistence of

widespread ethnic and civil conflicts, and frequent electoral and post-electoral strife are some manifestations of the failure of the State. The persistence of traditional institutions as a parallel system of governance, which provides some level of refuge for the rural population, often alienated by the State, is also another sign of the failure of the post-colonial State.

While argument abound that most African traditional institutions are also not equipped to compensate adequately for such failure of the State. In addition to their local orientation, many of these institutions face various limitations, especially in the areas of accountability and gender equality. Many are also hampered by their inability to define and secure property rights, thereby raising the transaction costs of resource allocation to their constituencies. Moreover, the growing economic diversity and complex division of labor, which mark the present era of globalization, are largely beyond the scope of traditional institutions. These institutions are, therefore, unlikely to be able to cope with poverty alleviation among their constituencies without the stewardship of the State. It is germane to state that if Africa must get it right, she must retrace her step back to the indigenous political systems that held sway before Colonial incursion and blend such with the realities of contemporary times.

To this end, this paper extrapolates the originality and practicability of *Ojira* in Idomaland and *Aladinma/Oha* in Igboland to show how the two systems were used in administering governance in present-day Nigeria before colonialism. For clarity of purpose, the paper is segmented into the ongoing introduction, who is the Idoma, who are the Igbo, workings of *Ojira* and *Aladinma/Oha*, comparative analysis of the two systems, and conclusion.

2. Who are the Igbo?

Distending through the Niger River from Agbor West to the borders of Cross River, traversing jaggedly through Northern Nsukka plateaus to certain fragments of the Atlantic shoreline and of cause, the western end of the Niger River live vibrant folk whose aboriginal dialect is Igbo. According to Ogbalu (1987: 13), they are of systematic height, normally black-skinned, throatily built with boulevard snout, curly black hair, and abstemiously thick lips. Bordering these people is the Ika, of the Niger Delta to the west. While the Idoma and Igala occupy the North and Northwestern borderlands and finally to the Southeast, we have the Efik-Ibibio (Obayemi 1980: 144-164), Igbo also refers to the inborn or prime language of one of the major ethnic consortiums in Nigeria, called the Igbo.

While the denotation and source of the word Igbo, are yet to be known. It is also not assured at what time, from where, and means through which the Igbo came to inhabit their current Place. Scholars like (Basden, 1938: 34; Uchendu, 1965: 32-33; Aniakor, 1988: 15; Afigbo, 1981: 12), linked them with the Jewish; saying they are the biblical lost tribe of Israel who got separated and driven towards the south from their kits and kins, consequent upon the conquest and annexation of North Africa by the Arab during their sojourn in prehistoric Egypt. This assertion notwithstanding, larger numbers of Igbo consider themselves as aboriginal of their present place of habitation. They contend that "Chineke" God formed and established them in their current location, a fact that is demonstrated in the Igbo concept of "*nfu n' ala*" deciphered as springing out of the soil and adducing to the time immemorial of their presence in this locations. Once more concerning the evolution of the distinctiveness of the Igbo world view in (Afigbo, 1981: 168), the *Nri* body of allegories talked about one "Chukwu" God who after making man, directed smith to desiccate the land, enabling the land to produce foodstuffs plus establishing the market days which are known as *Nkwo*, *Afor Orie* and *Eke* (emphasizes are mine).

Transcending colonialist arrival, the ancestral sections and specific villages were the biggest active governmental components found amidst the Igbo, although sub-tribal distinctiveness was occasionally involved for sacramental reasons or in times of war. The administrative and societal divisions, strengthened by many terminological differences in the Igbo dialect are equivalent to the multiplicity of governance and land tenancy method, sacred dogmas, and knack panaches established among the Igbo. Yet, here remain correspondingly

very sturdy communal oneness in the association of headship, control, and capability for all Igbo. Adumbrating more on the Igbo ethnic group, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, one-time scribe of the Commonwealth, said:

I will not detain you with ancestral/anthropological allocution here. Let it be enough for me to just say this about the origin of the Igbo: serious studies based on verifiable evidence indicate that the Igbo have lived in Igboland for almost as long as man has lived on earth. The archaeological finds at Ugwuele in Okigwe provide meaningful evidence of human activities in the theatre of Igbo civilization more than two hundred and fifty thousand years ago. Due to their mobility, the Igbo accounts for between 25% – 60% of the inhabitants of most States in Nigeria including Delta, Rivers, Lagos, Kano, Cross River, Kaduna, Akwa Ibom, and Plateau, to mention a few (Anyaku, 2010: 4).

Even though the people are primarily inhabitants of Eastern Nigeria, they are blown out towards all corners and crevices of Nigeria, Africa, and the entire world – flourishing, establishing, and inspiring themselves, the environment, and others in all aspects of life. The troupier American diplomat, Henry Kissinger, got it right when he submits this:

“The Ibo is the peripatetic Jews of West Africa... talented, pugnacious, and westernized; best still hated and disliked, but mostly detested by the mass of their fellow citizen in the Federation (Kissinger, 1972: 79).

The intention of this paper is not to unearth the past of the Igbo or who they are but suit it to say that the Igbo are those Nigerian inhabiting the area mostly referred to as the South-Eastern part of contemporary Nigeria. They are also found in a large population in some parts of Delta State (otherwise called Delta-Igbo's or the *Aniomas* of Delta North Senatorial Zone) and Rivers (otherwise called Rivers Igbo of Rivers East Senatorial Zone and partly Rivers West Zone), and even Benue State where they are found among the Agila and Igumale Idoma people. Also, the Afghanis around the Opobo area are of Igbo progenies (recall King Jaja of Opobo, who initially hailed from Amaigbo, the same town where the renowned global heavyweight boxing champion, "Dick Tiger" Ihenetu originated from). Likewise, we have the Igbankes in Edo State. Concisely put, indigenous Igbo exclusively inhabit the South-Eastern part of Nigeria; foremost parts of Delta and River States; and a small quota of Akwa-Ibom Benue, Cross River, Kogi, and Bayelsa States (Uchendu, 1965: 40-41).

3. Who are the Idoma?

The name 'Idoma' is said to be etymological, resulting from an assumed alleged ancestor 'Idu' or 'Idom'. That is *Idu-ma* or *Idom-ma*, which implies beget of or descendants of 'Idu' or 'Idom'. This was blended into Idoma. Idu was not the biological forbearer of the Idoma people as re-coined by the oral traditions of the 'approved history', but was, noted by Erim and other learned intellectuals to be the acknowledged migratory frontrunner of some three prominent Idoma groups namely: Adoka, Ugboju, and Otukpo (Erim, 1988: 14-15). Conferring to one of the sources, the name was first used by the Ugboju, Onyagede, and Oglewu sets collectively throughout the Colonial era in 1912 (Erim, 1981: 9). Previously, these groups of people along with those in the former Ankpa District were conjointly referred to as 'Okpoto' (*Akpoto*) by Colonial sources (Armstrong, 1955: 91). Also, Okpoga Division was renamed Idoma Division in 1928 following the Colonial re-organization of Nigeria. Afterward, the name Idoma was accepted officially by the whole group inside the then-Idoma Division. Consequently, the name Idoma became both the name and Language of the People.

The Idoma people yet speak dialects of one language are dispersed over broader terrestrial areas in Nigeria. They are dispersed over an expansive continuum of States in Nigeria at present. Such states include Benue which forms the second largest ethnic group, Nassarawa, Cross River; Taraba, Kogi, Enugu, and parts of Federal Capital Territory. Their language is said to belong to the Niger-Congo group of African Languages, particularly the Kwa-Sub-group. Apart from linguistic relationships most of them shared the same cultural closeness and to some extent backgrounds of origin and migrations (especially as to the issue of cradle land). For this work, the area generally referred to as Idomaland lies South of the Benue River. Situated within, the expansive dale of the

Benue/Cross River Basin. It lies within the latitude of 60° and 30° North and Longitude 80° East. The major portion of the land which is a transmittable girdle of area outspreads from Nassarawa State on the opposite bank where their Kense the Doma (*Idoma' Nokwu*) is resident, is the Northern frontier of Idomaland. The Igbo inhabits the Southern and some parts of the South-Eastern boundaries, that is from Nsukka across to Abakaliki. What is left of the South-Eastern precincts is inhabited by the Cross-Rivers neighbors along the Igede part of the land. Idomaland is also squashed between the Igala and Bassa to the West and the Tiv to the East. Hence, placing them in the Southern part of what is now called the Middle-Belt or North Central Nigeria (Armstrong, 1955: 88).

Ojira as Traditional Political Institution in Idomaland

As stated earlier, chains of Euro-centric scholars who were primarily anthropologists, linguists, archaeologists, and sociologists and many more, gave the impression that Africa was so backward that they could not develop any meaningful political arrangement. This misleading generally appears to have tinted the thought pattern of foreign sages about the African pre-colonial political system, to the degree that any well-organized, centralized larger institution found anywhere in Africa was quickly ascribed to the hermitic forces. For example, C. Seligman in his halitosis saw a make-believe invasion of Africa by some foreign-'white forces (prodigious enlightening militaries), which nurtured the standard of state establishment and subsequently its organizations. Studies have also revealed that such opinions were billeted and even purposefully improved upon by early home-grown scholars which steered to the construction of some level of 'endorsed history'. This sway can be found in the variously altered oral traditions on state formation in Africa. Examples of these include the Hausa Bayagida legend, the Yoruba Oduduwa myth, and the Idu legend in Idoma society among others (Obata, 1996: 18).

The above misconception was also prolonged by the British Colonial overseers in their management of the pre-colonial political assemblies of the Idoma; whom they look upon as 'head hunters', 'most backward' 'being unusually barbaric', irascible, and obdurate and of low astuteness (Magid, 1988: 67). O'kwu also argues out that such interpretations by the colonial officers led to the forcing of Alien rulers on the Idoma people (Okwu, 1988: 31). Indeed steered by this misconception Fortes and Evans Pritchard pigeonholed Idoma as one of the 'Stateless societies'. This misconception if matched with the realities available may demonstrate clear ignorance borne out of unclear knowledge of the people's culture. Hence, further evidence by African scholars has verified that the Idoma have a systematized political structure which they used in the observance of law and order in their society, whose foundation can be sketched many eras back. In track with the above Mbiti witnesses that:

... (Every one people) had their own discrete communal and governmental organization. The household, age grades, distinctive individuals in the community, nuptial customs, and traditional system of government administrative dignitaries, are all themes of peculiarity (Mbiti, 1970: 124).

The basic socio-political structure of the Idoma at its lowest receding tide is the *Iponu*, comprises of the man and his wife or wives child or children. *Adole*, the leader was the family head, who directs the affairs and settled differences within his family. The next is the *Ipoma*. This is a stretched family structure and encompasses the male descendant of a common male ancestor and their wives and children. They lived in a compound - *Odundole* group around the compound of an elder. The head of the *Ipoma* is the furthestmost senior elder of the most senior generation. This is trailed by the *Ole*. The *Ole* is made up of diverse *Ipoma* alleged to be descendants of a shared forerunner male or female. This is almost equal to the modern-day village structure fashioned by colonialists. The *Ole* is semi-autonomous and customarily occupies a visibly demarcated span of territory. The *Ole* had an *Ojila* that meet in an *Opu* and was presided over by the *Onyakwoche'Ole* who is the administrative and spiritual leader of the *Ole*. Another stage is the *Okwu* or *Opu* - the Descent. Several *Ole* rely on a common ancestry to shape this. The peak level of socio-political organization in Idomaland is *Aje*, the Clan. This is an expanse of

territory occupied by a number of the *Okwu* who believes in a common ancestor. The *Aje* has an *Och'Aje* (Chief of the Clan) as its head. Added to this, the *Aje* had an *Ojila*, which was presided over by elders of the constituent families and presided over by the most senior elder of the generations among them (Armstrong, 1955: 94).

Extrapolating from the above is the *Ojila*. The *Ojila* as a body was intact beginning from the *Ipoma* up to the *Aje* and is the highest organ of government that has the definitive power in the Idoma socio-political system. However, the foundation of *Ojila* in the Pre-colonial political organization of Idoma has not been satisfactorily adumbrated, evidence from oral tradition shows its natural evolution; and that it was the earliest form of political organization among the people and its origin goes far back to the earliest time in the cradle land. More so, the *Ojila* was made up of adult males of such a community just as the village assemblies in Iboland. Women are not allowed to partake directly, because, the Idoma believe their husband or brother would represent their interests and always pass on their contributions on issues (Adejo, 1984: 12-20).

Furthermore, deliberation in the *Ojila* tends to be controlled by elders representing different units *Anyakwoche'Ole* and other elderly persons of impact. Okpeh proclaimed that fledgling men yet allowed in, remained onlookers and could not express their views except through their seniors (Okpeh, 2002: 23). This explanation is, however, in contrast to modern-day *Ojila* in Idoma society, which is free for all adult male contribution settings. However, Elaigwu contends that: "To a certain extent able-bodied men of applauded gallantry, astuteness, and repute were allowed to speak" (Elaigwu, 1988: 32). In the same line of argument, Adejo remarks: "However, young men who show or stimulate mark of talking properly among elders could add to the discussion on the issues of his father's Village" (Adejo, 1984: 20). From the foregoing, we may infer that, although a gerontocratic class of elders who in the spirit of democracy were representatives of their various units constitutionally dominated the *Ojila* in Idoma pre-colonial society; helpful assistances from young men were habitually celebrated in staid debates.

Additionally, it is tough for an individual or a group to dominate the *Ojila*. This is because a consensual self-governing principle directs the decision-making procedure. Though the *A'Obialekwu* fashioned a gerontocracy class in the *Ojila*, they were not by the slimmest means able to translate that structure into a selected Council of Elders. To give solutions to an important matter affecting the community, discussions, negotiations, and debates are employed by the elders in the *Ojila* meetings with consented agreements based on the discussion as the solution to issues at the end of the meeting(s) emphasis is mine (Okpeh, 2002: 152).

The functions executed by the *Ojila* could be grasped as both legislative and judiciary in nature. The *Ojila* made laws and judged outstanding disputes between individuals and between one social unit and another. In addition, it is pragmatic in taking into account appeals for jurisdiction, placing the bulk of public opinion instantaneously behind the wounded party and levying fines or other forms of punishments on the guilty party for re-modification and curative purposes. The *Ojila* also performed the act as Kingmakers, approving the King's selection of *Ai'gabo* and selecting the *Ai-uta* or *Ai-oga* constabulary (Okpeh, 2002: 154). The *Ojila* even at present remains a key vivacious political institution in Idomaland regardless of the tidal waves of transformations.

The *Aladinma/Oha* as Traditional Political Institution in Igboland

The *Aladinma* which solely means "let the land be good" in the Igbo language is a political system governed by elders (*Oha*). The *Aladinma* was developed in pre-colonial Igboland to evade the perils of tyranny, autocracy, and wars tormenting ancient Igbo societies. *Aladinma* will best be cherished within the interconnection of Igbo traditional self-help mutual development and social well-being which helps explain the transformational historic growth of the Igbo social order. The *Aladinma* like other customary establishments according to Schapera, must not only be viewed from the point of maintenance of social order within the regional structure of the ordered exercise of forcible authority through the risk of or likely use of potency but as a system of common leadership,

conveying the jobs as well as the authorities of leaders (Lijpart, 1990: 409). The autonomous acts and the performance of executive, legislative, and judiciary functions of the *Aladinma* come from the ancient way of life, behaviors, and the laws of the land represented in a local proverb: *Eze no nan chi* (meaning there is a king in every lineage) (Hendricks, 1994: 105-121). The *Aladinma* being the utmost broad assembly of the people is according to Olaudah Equiano ruled and managed over by people of great toughness, acumen, veracity, and passion (Lijpart, 1990: 560). The *Aladinma* system is development enthralled. This is authenticated by being capable of blossoming in the face of limited resources. The societies are structured to provide social conveniences such as health centers, electricity, schools, churches, and pipe-borne water, including the furthering of the studies of brainy but needy students in foreign countries. In almost all traditional Igbo societies, the people offer these amenities through levies, particularly electricity provision, which involves cabling, poles, and buying transformers. Being able to flourish in the façade of threatened resources, the Igbo traditional governance system remains very judicious in the management of resources in some cases better than the Nigerian copious democratic state.

Accountability is vital and enthusiastically followed in the *Aladinma* and public life. How long a traditional leader remains in office rest predominantly on the level to which he is accountable to the people on matters of resource administration and uprightness in the duty he embraces as a sacrosanct belief? Derisory answerability is synonymous with political perversity which is why any leader caught in the act is made to face public attack besides being compulsorily removed from office and in some instances, made to execrate with *Ala* (the earth deity) to assert his virtuousness or otherwise.

To avoid such contingency, leaders of *Aladinma/Oha* make determinations to be liable to the people and his *chi* (personal god). A disgraced and pushed out-of-office leader not only faces the embarrassment and humiliation of himself alone but his entire family and even his *aburu* (lineage). As such doing evil or not being accountable is not accepted in Igbo political culture.

Of great significance in the Igbo political system is the administration of justice within the framework of the *Aladinma/Oha*. It is accustomed that any person or leader that is unfair or jaundiced in judgment is revealing himself and his family to ridicule and dishonor which is an unembellished situation that may end in excommunication. Consequently, the leaders and the followers endeavor to consciously do the right thing, for the right reason, at the right time, and for the right people to make sure judgments are provided without fear or favor.

In most cases, divinity is left to arbitrate difficulties that the leaders feel they are unqualified of addressing or in which the revelries agree to take the situation before the deity. In this case, it is the chief priest of the deity consulted that takes charge, and judgment is instantaneous. In the *Aladinma* decisions are arrived at through negotiation, unanimity (*Nkwekolita*), concession, teamwork, and sessions (*Igba Izu*). The laws against misconduct and decadent acts are given with proper chastisement. This keeps society in check and nonviolent.

In the *Aladinma/Oha*, the leadership chain is based completely on age, seniority, or accomplishment. There are few cases of fighting for succession in exceptional cases where a particular person might not be liked by a section of the *Aladinma/Oha*. In such a state discourse and harmony are used to decide his fate either way. The *Aladinma/Oha* offers the real-world experience of a shared treaty between rulers and ruled at the fundamental of village government and populace interfaces.

In unified communities like Oguta (Nzimiro, 1972: 13). The village is ruled by the Obi (*Eze Igwe*) and the association of state council (*Ogbe*) of both royalties and those who are affiliates of the council because of their affluence and designations attained. The women's organization (*Otu Ogene*) is represented by the eldest woman in Oguta, the *Ogene Nwanya*, age groups, agbanta, and Igbo societies, all help the state council in consultative, executive, and public dealings. These groups form the political class, with the Obi (who is never an autocrat as

these groups act as checks and balances to his excesses), as the political head. Thus, Ezeigwe. Oguta even if centralized was highly democratic in the decisions taken in the Ogbe just like in the *Aladinma/Oha*.

Comparative Analysis: *Ojira*, *Aladinma/Oha* & Modern African Governance System

Notwithstanding the picture painted by Eurocentric scholars about the African Continent and her people, one thing that remains certain is that Africans are peculiar people as exemplified in their various ways of life including the political structure which is the concern of this work. Before European incursion, the various African societies were at different stages of political development with unique and distinct futures aligned with the beliefs and practices of the people as exemplified in *Aladinma/Oha* and *Ojira*. These two forms of governance system though practiced by different ethnic groups (the Igbo and the Idoma), exhibit the true value that the African people placed on humanity as displayed in the basic features of the systems of governance which previously helped in checkmating arbitrary form of governance as seen in modern African adopted liberal governance system.

The Igbo and the Idoma of Southeastern and North-central Nigeria had for fear of the vulnerabilities of political authoritarianism and loss of liberty, concomitantly developed lasting self-governing settlements for cooperative living, enthralling the rise of ordered customary political institutions, structures, techniques, and systems for self-government with many shared physiognomies ensuring the balance between state and society.

Adducing to the above submission, Abdulai declared:

African societies had some form of political establishments that tend to their daily undertakings preceding colonialism. However, these institutions vary in political makeup. For example, states such as Asante, Buganda, Sokoto, Kano, and Zulu kingdoms had vastly integrated political organizations with intricate bureaucracy, with a king constituting an apex governmental body. The king is usually buoyed by his ministers to expedite the administration of the society... (Abdulai, 2012: 12).

Although different in structure and complexity, basically due to different stages of Socio-Political development of the various African states, these African traditional governance system had an in-built mechanism that caters to the welfare of the people of the various societies, thus commanding relative loyalty and respect for the system. Affirming this assertion, Adedeji opined that:

...is a clue that *African* traditional institutions had a major attribute of putting the people first, which facilitated great loyalty and respect *to both the ruler and the ruled*. (Adedeji, 2018: 2) (Emphasizes are mine)

Ironically, this *modus Operandi* has been distorted by the modern governance system. For instance, many African countries have undergone/undergone several regimes where parochial consideration, more than the general wellbeing of the people holds sway resulting, in the dominance of a few personalities in the government of African states.

The drive to correct this anomaly is the cause of most inter-ethnic crises, insurgencies, and militancy today in most African states (Nigeria, Rwanda, Liberia, and Serra lone among others). Worthy of note also is that, although corruption has been adduced by many military officers for their incessant incursion into government in modern Africa, emerging facts have proven that the strive by assumed neglected ethnic groups to get to power and governance is one of the major push factors for military coups and counter-coups in modern Africa. The nation of Nigeria is a practical example of such military incursions starting from 1966-1999.

Both the Igbo and Idoma are deficient in comprehensive administrative incorporation, and a single pyramidal system (Anene, 1966: 12), hence dovetailing traditions with wide-ranging separation of power, simplified fecund group deliberations for good control, and promoting concord, safety, impartiality, parity, and

progress (Vansina, 1990: 99). These comprehensive institutions made the misapplication of power or ferocious conflicts infrequent as exemplified in *Ojira and Aladinma/Oha*.

The case is different today in most African countries where like we said earlier, the concentration of power in the hand of a few individuals/ particular ethnic group, leading to negligence even in the distribution of the nation's resources have continued to create rancor and disharmony among the federating units. A very cogent example is found in the consistent struggle for cessation by the Igbo resulting in the Nigeria-Biafra Civil War of 1967, the Movement for the Actualization of Biafra (MOSSOB), and the ongoing Independent People of Biafra Movement under the leadership of Nnamdi Kanu. This is not in any way undermining other such movements as the Oduduwa Republic movement being led by Sunday Igboho, The movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) among many others.

Reacting to injustice and partiality in governance as the cause of Biafra secession from Nigeria in the inglorious Nigeria-Biafra war of 1967-1970, the Biafran war leader Odumegwu Ojukwu stated:

...Aware that you can no longer be protected in your life and property by any government based outside Eastern Nigeria; believing that you are born free and have certain inalienable rights which can best be preserved by yourself.... I hereby..... (Abutu, 2021: 283)

Both the *Ojira* and *Aladinma/Oha* in Igbo and Idoma traditional leadership systems have many positives attached to them. They are by nature, democratic, representative, development-oriented, and accountable. There are democratic in the sense that there involve all adults, although in groups. By congregating at the village square or other chosen meeting places, matters affecting the community are thought on and actions to be taken on such an issue will be mutually voted on and the majority votes will be overcome. Decisions therefore reached are jointly executed and most times, an observing team will be instituted to superintend the execution process. The leadership in the Igbo and Idoma traditional society is represented in the sense that every adult male is entitled to one vote irrespective of age, social class, or religious affiliation. Even in situations whereby clan leaders (usually elders) are mandated to serve as senates of their clans, they take feedback home to the village, kindred, and the facility. By this means, every member of the community is kept up-to-date on issues and agreements within the community. With this, ignorance is not taken as an excuse because procedures are put in place to ensure that nobody strays or disruptions a rule merely because he is not sentient to such a decision.

All these are in contrast with the nature and character of modern African governance where rulership has been personalized because of a few people's insistence on remaining in power. This, resulted in the establishment of intimidatory leaders, who bank principally on fear and instrument of coercion to affirm their authority, and compel obedience from their fellow countrymen. Many examples range from Paul Biya of Cameroon, the late Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, the late Idi Amin of Uganda, and the late Sani Abacha of Nigeria among many others. These characteristic traits of modern governance have and have continued to occasion bereavement of development ideas hence putting many African countries in the underdeveloped situation we find ourselves in today. Supporting this view, Isamah laments:

Precisely, since the late 1980s, African nations have been undergoing crunches of governance, a democratic change that has all resulted in poor economic and social development. In a continent with ample human and natural resources, so many people live in poverty and misery particularly in Nigeria with grave consequences on their quality of life... (Isamah, 2002: 123).

Suffice it to say that: although pre-colonial African Governance systems were mostly of a lifetime because of the kingship hereditary nature, the various procedures to checkmate arbitrary rule like the presentation of empty calabash to the Oba (symbolizing rejection by the people) in the various Yoruba kingdoms and the compulsory oath of allegiance to the *Alekwu* Oracle by the *Oche* in Idomaland, and the functions of the *Ozamas* in Benin Kingdom, all serve to keep the kings in check. The organization of governance in both study areas is similar as they are both centrally controlled and power vested in the village council of elders or the council of all adult

males known as *Ojira* (Idoma) and *Aladinma/Oha* (Igbo) as depicted in the philosophy of both areas with fundamental culture as well as some level of self-sufficiency granted to the family, the compound, or the lineage in the administration of the society/community. Both systems are often organized to ensure that the constituent units are properly integrated into a whole.

Given these checkmating processes, the issues of accountability were highly visible from the governor to the governed. Nevertheless, the same cannot be said of modern governance. The inability of most African Countries to develop several years after colonization can be ascribed to a lack of accountability from the government. For instance, even though Nigeria is one of the leading producers of petroleum products in the world, the country has constantly remained retrogressive in both socio-economic and political development. Thus, malnourishment, pitiable health panorama, redundancy and underdevelopment, dismal poverty, escalating insecurity, and political volatility have remained the seal of the land. Adumbrating this concerning Nigeria, Isamah again said:

The prevalent level of poverty, the non-stop ethnic and civil conflicts, and constant electoral and post-electoral friction are some indicators of the failure of the Independent State of Nigeria (Isamah, 2002: 137) Both the *Ojira* (Idoma) and *Aladinma/Oha* (Igbo) encourage an egalitarian society as well as economic, social, and political contributions aimed at bringing up the members of the society to become responsible individuals, who would be useful to themselves as well as to their society and also individuals who would be happy and willing to defend their society/community when necessary. On the other hand, modern governance serves as a breeding ground for corruption, inequality, greed, and self-centeredness as depicted in the nature and character of modern African governance which is an offshoot of foreign influence concomitant with European incursion which has and is denying the African's right to freedom from discrimination and dignity of the mortal being. This modern governance system according to Ekanade,

...convinces people that individualism, competition, and self-commodification are the natural vicissitudes of life. Consequently, civil society is concussed to accept, through contriving capitalistic hyperboles, that the world is nothing more than a market in which everything, and everyone, can be bought and sold (Ekanade, 2014: 1 – 14).

Given this scenario, the traditional African practice and respect for dignity, accountability, and reverence for family name and value have been thrown to the wind. Today's African governance promotes and celebrates mediocrity, ineptitude, avalanche, and corruption. So much so that, those seeking political positions are mostly accepted or forced on the people based on their/sponsor's wealth capacity against competence and acceptability. Because of this, most governments in Africa (led mostly by incompetent moneybags or stooges to money bags), are focused less and directionless. The resultant consequence is the increasingly high level of underdevelopment and excessive dependence on foreign loans/aid with their collusive negative impacts on the continent in line with the submission of the World System Theory by Immanuel Wallenstein.

Dissimilarities

While *Aladinma/Oha* and *Ojira* are indigenous to the people, modern liberal governance is alien, forced on the people by European colonialists to fulfill Colonia and Neocolonial interests.

While *Aladinma/Oha* and *Ojira* promote an all-inclusive governance aimed at promoting unity, harmony, and development, modern liberal governance is targeted at divisive tendencies (divide and rule), creating room for the continued exploitation of the continent through stooges. There are great differences in the scope and composition of both systems at the levels of organization and membership the *Aladinma/Oha* and *African Modern governance* are outstanding and transient larger areas than that of the *Ojira* which is a smaller and transient small area. There is equally more participation in the *Aladinma/Oha* and the *Ojira*, than modern governance system

because most people today, have developed nonchalant attitudes toward governance due to long-range negligence and disappointments.

The *Aladinma/Oha* African Modern system of governance has continued to remain a common force to reckon with in Nigeria, the same cannot be said to apply to the *Ojira* (Idoma).

Whereas leadership in both the *Aladinma/Oha* (Igbo) and *Ojira* (Idoma), is seen as servanthood and is attained by Age, Experience, and Exploit in life, modern leadership is a quick wealth-making venture, where people troop in to become rich. This characteristic nature of today's governance is the major cause of the persistent political violence, coups, counter-coups, thuggery, and win-at-all-cost syndrome that has bedeviled the political atmosphere of most African states serving as a bane to development.

The language of proceeding at the *Aladinma/Oha* is Igbo and Idoma for *Ojira*, with effective understanding and comprehension while French, Portuguese, and English (completely alien to the people), are the languages of proceeding for modern African governments. While we in no way doubt the intellectual and comprehension capabilities of the Africans for other languages, it is important to note that the best way to communicate, is by "One's mother's tongue" as ascribed to by a common Chinese proverb.

4. Conclusion

In no way is growing Africa's leadership style of today the progenies or beneficiaries of the African leadership style of the 1500s. The leaders of the 1500s were only humans too, of course, and they had their unconventionality. But they all had a certain knack, which is an obvious passion for the welfare of their people as God gave them the light to see. This is enclosed in the check and balance system incorporated into governance as discussed above.

Governance was mostly peopled focused on the dictates of the people. However, in contraction to this, today's African adopted governance system has so bowdlerized the people across ethnic, religious, and other insular foundations that Africans have a difficult question to answer, "Who should rule; is it the people?" Regrettably, this query is tough for a typical African to reply - preponderance cannot postulate who "the people" are. And this inquiry, if appropriately answered, should tell us how "the people" ought to be leading. Should they be gathered in a place? Should they vote by ballot or pick others to rule over them? The riposte to these questions and the veracity on the ground in most African States that embraced liberal democracy is pretty inappreciable as elections and governance are characterized by electoral ferocity, rigging, political murders corruption, and maladministration. Such drifts dispirit many competent applicants from vying for public offices, therefore, leaving politics in the hands of unexceptional people and money bags.

For the benefit of hinge-sight, it is important to note here that although the modern system of governance was imposed on the African people by the colonialist, it is not completely evil in its entirety. For instance, the unification and formation of many present-day African states (Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Cameroon, South Africa, Kenya among others) are all the handiwork of the colonialist which cannot be overlooked. However, the intention and application of this governance system particularly in contemporary times are what calls for concern. It is given this, that many scholarly works have propounded the importance and effectiveness of the African Traditional system of governance to the developmental pursuit of the African states. This paper has come to swell credence to the agitations for the incorporation of the African mode of governance into modern politics, using the Idomaland *Ojira* and *Aladinma/Oha* of Igboland as references point.

This is because governance in Africa today has remained defined by tentativeness and tokenism. Those who largely buy their way into power sit on the throne belching out orders like potentates. They regard the people as foot mats and are adroit at devising means of side-tracking the voters in the voting process, this results in impunity. They act to dominate the General Will of the people which is contrary to the indigenous African system of governance.

To stem this tide, we must look inward and retrospectively too because there is something glorious and worthy of emulation from Africa's past. Respect for elders and constituted authorities, dignity in labor, concern for one's neighbor, community service, and patriotism that Africa is known for needed to be restored. Rather than seconding to defeatist traits, there should be deep retrospection in the search for our forgotten virtues to be channeled into constructive use, particularly at this time that interaction with the outside world, behooves us to use global veracities forecasted on cutting-edge technology to grow our continent. Because of this, there arises the need to organize and build consciousness among Africans on the need to incorporate valuable traditions of the indigenous governance system into modern liberal democracy for full and participatory representations in governance.

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